

**CHINESE BUDDHIST LEADER WU ZEHENG FILES CASE WITH
UN WORKING GROUP ON ARBITRARY DETENTION**

Geneva, Switzerland – The legal team for Chinese Buddhist leader Wu Zeheng and his 18 imprisoned colleagues has filed a petition today with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, requesting it investigate their detention and find that they are being held in violation of China’s obligations under international law.

In July 2014, the Chinese government detained Wu and his colleagues after more than 100 armed Chinese policemen staged a coordinated raid on a number of businesses and living compounds run by those associated with his religious group, Huazang Dharma. This came only a month after *Xinhua* ran a front-page news story naming and explaining the “social harms” caused by 14 “evil religions.”

In addition to detaining other key leaders in the religious group, the Chinese Government launched an assault on Huazang Dharma through the state-run media. Newspapers have described the sect as an “illegal organization,” which “takes advantage of followers’ trust” and “forces them to take orders.” Wu personally was even accused of enriching himself and raping young girls, even though he was never charged with these crimes. Wu was previously imprisoned on so-called economic crimes after writing open letters to the Chinese government in 1998-1999 complaining about endemic corruption in the one-party system and infringement on religious liberty.

In the first day of his detention, Wu was kept awake for 16 hours, denied any food and water, and consecutively questioned by four different groups of police officers. He has also been held in a small cell with no bed or bedding materials, forced to sleep on a hard floor, and denied access to medication and warm clothing. The other eighteen detainees are being held in overcrowded rooms where they must take turns laying down to sleep.

“A terrible injustice is being done here,” said Jared Genser, international counsel to Wu and his associates. “The world should be deeply concerned that China is now extending its persecution of religious groups beyond minorities into mainstream Han Buddhist communities,” he added.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is an independent and impartial body of the UN Human Rights Council, which itself is comprised of 47 countries that are members of the United Nations. The group itself is comprised of five legal experts from Benin, Mexico, Norway, South Korea, and Ukraine.

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